

Beating the CIA

Fight is a family affair

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by Jeffrey Stein
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For Victor Marchetti, quitting the top-echelon lair of a Deputy Director's office in the Central Intelligence Agency after 16 years to become one of the C.I.A.'s most profound and feared critics has not been a terrible and lonely ordeal. From beginning to end, it has been a family affair:

"We recognized that leaving the agency would be a major change, but we would keep on doing things as usual. We didn't want a cultural revolution," the 44 year-old Marchetti said in a rambling conversation at his Oakton home last week.

That meant maintaining a \$20,000-plus income while pounding out the books and articles that eventually rattled the CIA so much it took him to court to stop publication of his works.

It also meant a major realignment of household responsibilities. Marchetti is now a "house-husband", as he calls himself.

But *The Cult of Intelligence* will finally be published in mid-May, and the family happily shares in the new chores and responsibilities. In fact, Marchetti said, the whole process has brought them closer together.

"I feel like I'm in my twenties, like a whole new world is opening up," he smiled. "It's both more beautiful and more frightening. But being older, and not 20, I'm more able to appreciate the beauty, and still be aware of the dangers and pitfalls."

Wife works

A sufficient income was guaranteed when his wife, Bernice, went to work, first at Fairfax Hospital and later for a private doctor.

"She had been pestering to go to work for some time before I left the agency," Marchetti said. "We talked it over, and when I decided to quit, she immediately seized the opportunity to dash out and get a job. There was no stopping her."

Marchetti has had to pick up the chores his wife used to do. Any weekday will find him up by 6:30 a.m. and cooking breakfast for Bernice, two of their three sons and his elderly father. He packs three lunches while Bernice makes out a list of things that need to be done that day.

At 8:30, he sends them out the kitchen door, and, still in his bathrobe with uncombed hair, tries to snatch a glance at the morning paper before tackling the dishes and laundry.

Then there is always the trash and the garbage, and this time of year, the garden will need work. But he said he loves his new life. It gives him freedom.

Back in touch

"One of the first things I enjoyed was going down to Vienna, parking the car, walking around town, in and out of stores, getting to know people."

back in touch with the world," he said.

He feels he got out of touch with the world in the CIA, within which he rose from a clandestine operator in Europe in 1953 to the Office of the Deputy Director for Planning, Programming and Budgeting in 1966.

From that vantage point he could look over just about all the CIA's worldwide operations. Why did he leave?

"In different moods, I give different answers," he shrugged. "But basically, the Agency and the government just didn't seem to be in step with the times."

"I grew up in the war years," he said. "Then came the Cold War. Everything was high-powered, emotional. We were fighting for democracy, against the monolithic Communist menace. By 1960, it didn't look that way. Civil Rights - the country was on fire - and I had a hell of a time believing what was going on in Vietnam," he said, rolling his hands around each other. "Life wasn't so simplistic anymore, the enemies weren't so easy to identify, and the good guys had smudges on their white hats."

"The agency and the government just didn't seem to be in step with the times," he repeated, shaking his head. "I wanted reform of the intelligence collection arms. There is little need for the old-time spy in this day and age: He was always highly over-rated."

"We are well off with the technical systems, satellites and so on. They are non-provocative."

Nothing changed

There was a pause. "I couldn't stay. Nothing ever got changed. You couldn't get anything done. The CIA is incapable of reforming itself."

"I tried to cut down on the airlines, the luxurious facilities. Nothing budged. (CIA Director Richard) Helms wasn't interested in management."

All the Directors are interested in is playing politics with the White House and the Pentagon, he claimed. "Colby (William Colby, the new Director) will be the same way. The CIA has not been good in the espionage business for some time now," he said flatly.

His sons picked up the new tempo of American political and social change faster than their father, wrestling with reform in the agency.

"My boys would bring home their friends, now older, aware of what was

"And I would play them Green Beret records. It didn't wash."

"And finally, I was 39, and I saw 40 on the horizon. I asked myself, 'Do I want to be a fat GS-18 running the Office of Current Reference?'"

Sons' support

The three Marchetti sons have pulled oars with their father and mother to keep the ship sailing through a storm of controversy during the court battles with the agency over *The Cult of Intelligence*, a thorough analysis of the CIA's organization and worldwide activities.

Victor Jr., is now 19, Jeff, 14, and Christian, 11. All once wanted to follow Dad's footsteps into the CIA.

Victor, Jr. was a good student and a good athlete in high school, but decided not to go to college last year. He works for a construction company now, and has his own apartment with a friend. He plays the guitar well, his father said. They remain close.

The second son, Jeff, is a lanky and athletic ninth grader with an infectious grin and outgoing manner. He hasn't pinned down what he wants to do yet. "One day it's a Senator, another day a dentist, a doctor, a rock musician, or a professional soccer player," his father said with affection.

Christian, the youngest at 11, hasn't given it too much thought yet. He still looks to his Dad.

"They're all typical, suburban, All-American kids," Marchetti said with a chuckle. "We're a close-knit family."

Confederates

"They're all interested in history," he said, "especially the Civil War. All three have strong Confederate feelings. They see the Confederates as having been true rebels who fought the system and were denied their rights to secede."

"They have an emotional pull for the underdog who got stomped down by the Northern industrial states."

As his wife and sons readjusted to their new circumstances, so did their friends in different ways.

"We've lost some friends who don't believe in what I'm doing," he said matter-of-factly. "And we have other friends from the agency who feel I'm entitled to my beliefs. And then, some of my best friends have also resigned in the last two years."

"But we've also met a whole new world of friends," he added. "Mostly reporters, activists, and others."

But he is happiest with his three sons' support. "They find it gratifying to find that their father speaks his piece," he said contentedly.

Out from under

His own transition has been profound. "The thing I like the most about not being with the agency anymore is getting out from under a corporation, a bureaucracy, a huge institution," he says leaning forward in his chair. "I'm interested in local and national affairs now. When I was with the agency, I was always in the world of international relations."

"Before, I just read newspapers. I didn't get to meet the people."

Marchetti paused a moment to consider. "I think I have more faith in the country now," he mused. "I think people are more interested and aware of what's happening."

And then, firmly, "When people get hit in their pocketbooks, they begin to put two and two together."

With monthly checks from his CIA pension book royalties, lecture fees and his wife's salary, his own pocketbook has not felt too drastic a pinch. His needs, too, have changed.

"I don't need the clothes and other stuff I needed before. Sometimes you feel a little funny showing up somewhere in a suit that's out of style, but..." and his voice trailed off with a shrug and a flip of the wrist.

"And we have two old cars, nine years old, with a least 80,000 miles on them. And, of course, we can't take big expensive vacations anymore. But I still have Redskins tickets, and Aren tickets, and we still go out to dinner. We don't go in

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Washington as much; we patronize the local restaurants now, and there are quite a few good ones." They both like good Chinese food. He is a master chef of northern Chinese delicacies, he said.

Unusual Success

Marchetti's was an unusually successful career in a class-conscious organization like the C.I.A., long considered a bastion of Northern liberal WASP influence. Its predecessor, the wartime Office of Strategic Services, the O.S.S., was mockingly referred to as "Oh, So Social". Few Italian-Americans reached the executive suite.

"I was an anomaly, especially in the area of clandestine operations, which attracted the 'Best and the Brightest,'" Marchetti said. "My father was a plumber."